

FIRST MINISTERS' MEETING – KEY MESSAGES

February 14, 2022

- Thank you colleagues for gathering at short notice. And apologies to those in the west for the early hour. As usual, I am joined by Dominic LeBlanc. Ministers Lametti and Mendicino have also joined us for today's discussion.
- It is important that we meet today to talk about the ongoing protests and blockades across the country and what we need to do, together, to address them.
- I know many Canadians, including myself, are frustrated with the pandemic, frustrated with having our lives disrupted for two years. Canadians have done what we asked them. We all want to be able to move on.
- We believe in the right to peaceful protest.
- But the activities taking place across the country are no longer just about COVID and they have gone well beyond peaceful protest.
- These are organized events, spreading across Canada. Some of these events are supported by money and organizers from outside the country. While this may have started in Ottawa, we are seeing flare-ups in almost every jurisdiction. This is happening in other countries, as well.
- Critical infrastructure is being targeted. Ports of entry are experiencing blockages. We are facing significant economic disruptions, with the breakdown of supply chains. Manufacturing plants have had to go idle, and the flow of trade and essential supplies is being threatened.
- This is costing Canadians their jobs and undermining our economic and national security. It is affecting Canada's reputation internationally, hurting trade and commerce, and undermining confidence and trust in our institutions.
- This situation is escalating. We each have to look at all possible measures to respond in the national interest, and we need to resolve the

current challenges as quickly as possible. We also need to present strong disincentives to deter potential future events. We do need to be proportional in our response. I fully recognize the risk of appearing to overreach and inflaming the very complaints about freedom that some are protesting.

- Some provinces and municipalities have declared states of emergency or taken other measures. Doug, I was pleased to see your announcement last week, declaring a state of emergency in Ontario and putting in place related measures. This gives you, and the police enforcing the law, significant tools to protect infrastructure and levy stiff penalties to those breaking the law. It also provides strong disincentives to individuals protesting illegally – such as revoking licences.
- Tim, I saw what you did in Nova Scotia, under your provincial Emergency Management Act – banning blockades on roads or highways, with significant fines.
- I know there has been excellent collaboration between law enforcement agencies, between our ministers, and among officials – across the three levels of government. There have been many conversations about the situation.
- Thanks to all of you and your ministers for working so collaboratively to explore solutions to address the problems we are facing.
- For those of you who have not yet taken steps to prepare for these types of events, I encourage you to look at what Ontario or others have done. No one is immune. Federal ministers would be pleased to help and Dominic can facilitate this.
- We are now at a point where we need to consider further options to address this national crisis. Today, we would like to consult you on the use of the federal Emergencies Act to assist our collective response efforts.
- To ensure that we can have a candid and open exchange, I would ask that our consultations remain confidential.

- We have been looking at all the tools in the federal toolbox to see how we can most effectively complement your efforts.
- This is not about displacing provincial or territorial jurisdiction, or superseding measures you have in place.
- This is about supplementing measures in your jurisdictions with additional federal authorities to give law enforcement the maximum leverage to be able to uphold the rule of law and deal with the situation we are facing.
- The Emergencies Act is meant to be used for matters that have reached the level of a national emergency. We believe we have reached that point -- where there is a national emergency arising from threats to Canada's security. I convened an urgent Cabinet meeting last night and have the support of my ministers.
- I will turn to Minister Lametti in a moment to walk you through some of the details on the specific measures we are considering and would like to consult you on.
- But first, let me be clear - a declaration of emergency is an extraordinary step and a measure of last resort. We recognize the gravity of the decision. I also want to assure you what this would NOT be – this is not about bringing in the military.
- This is about targeted, specific, temporary measures such as prohibiting the assembly of protestors in key areas, like border crossings, or directing essential services, like tow truck drivers. Everything that would be done under the Act would be compliant with the Charter and with our fundamental commitment to the rule of law.
- We want to seek your advice and views on how best to respond to the current circumstances. Regardless of the course we ultimately take to respond, it is essential that we work together, in a collaborative and cooperative way.
- David, over to you.

- Any questions for Minister Lametti?
- I will ask Dominic to say a few words before we open it up. Dominic, please go ahead.
- I will now turn the floor over to you for comments and questions. In particular, I would like to hear your views on what measures you don't currently have that we could supplement through the Emergencies Act by using proportional, time-limited authorities. How can we help you? It would be good to hear how we can support you with these measures and how we can collaborate further.
- John, why don't we start with you?

[Invite comments from premiers, starting with Premier Horgan.]

Conclusion

- Thank you for your time and what has been a valuable discussion. It will help me in formulating a decision.
- Later today, we will send you each a letter outlining what we have discussed.
- We want to support you as you deal with these urgent issues of national security and I am confident that, in working together, we can find a resolution to the situation.

Irrelevant

